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Tips for stocking a healthy pantry



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Calling all peanut butter lovers!

## The WEIGHT of Processed Foods

**WHAT YOU EAT MATTERS! Researchers found that the consumption of ultra-processed foods was significantly associated with a 14% higher risk of death from all causes.**

It's the 1950s. World War II has ended and technology is rapidly changing. Money is tight and families are looking for affordable and convenient foods. A demand for frozen meals, canned goods and other processed foods is on the rise. The way Americans eat is changed forever.

*"I'm late—but dinner won't be."* This tagline helped to transform TV dinners into an American household staple. Maybe you remember this change in eating in your household.

Maybe these meals include fun memories of watching your favorite show while eating on TV trays. Or maybe these were staple meals in your home with both of your parents in the workforce. Possibly these frozen meals bring back memories of pastimes with your grandparents. Whatever your past may be, processed foods likely held a place in your history.

Fast forward to today, approximately 60% of the American diet comes from processed foods.

With processing often comes the dreaded added salt, sugar and calories (Oh my!) - those nutrients in excess have been shown to lead to diabetes, hypertension and weight gain.

One study done at the National Institutes of Health found that people ate about 500 more calories when they ate an ultra-processed diet versus those who ate an unprocessed diet. And more bad news, the ultra-processed foods didn't decrease any levels of hunger.

There's no doubt you will find some form of processed foods in almost anyone's kitchen. While it may be out of the question to avoid all processed foods, it may be more important to focus on how to avoid ultra-processed foods. So how do you know which ultra processed foods to avoid? First, you need to understand what makes a food "processed." And second, you need to have the knowledge and confidence to make the best choice for you.



**GET MOVING!** Find an activity you enjoy and stick with it to get some daily physical activity.

## The Joy of Physical Activity

Time flies when you're having fun, and the same is true when you do an activity that you enjoy! Do you recall a time when you felt great moving your body? A morning walk around the neighborhood? An afternoon exercise class with friends? Good music that had you grooving with your family?

The best way to make an exercise habit stick is to find something you enjoy. Start with activities, locations, and times that work for you. Pick an exercise that sounds fun, make the location convenient for you and during a time when you feel your best.

### Be Active. Eat Healthy!

This month, I will take action by...

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# What Exactly is “Ultra-Processed?”

A processed food is any food that has been altered in some way through preparation or cooking. Food processing might mean just simple things like cutting and cooking. Or it could mean doing more complicated things like pasteurizing or refining. It can make raw foods more tasty, reduce waste and also make them more convenient to use.

There are three categories that experts use to describe processed foods.



Tomato on salad

vs.



Tomato sauce

vs.



Sauce on frozen pizza

**Unprocessed or Minimally Processed Foods:** think whole vegetables, fruits, nuts, meats, eggs and milk.

**Processed Foods:** think whole foods that have been changed, but not in a way that is detrimental to your health. This could be canned tuna, beans, cheese or whole wheat bread.

**Ultra-Processed Foods:** these go through multiple processes. They contain many added ingredients and are highly altered. Examples of this are soft drinks, chips, candy, sweetened breakfast cereal, packaged soup and hot dogs, to name a few.

Source: <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/articles/what-is-ultra-processed-food>

### Additional Examples

Minimally Processed	Peanuts	Strawberries
Processed	Salted peanuts in trail mix	Frozen strawberries packed with syrup
Ultra-Processed	Peanut butter cookies	Freeze-dried strawberries added to boxed cereal, strawberry jam

**DID YOU KNOW?** Almost all foods go through some processing before they are ready to eat.



*Fresh Conversations* is developed by: Iowa Dept. of Public Health [idph.iowa.gov/inn](http://idph.iowa.gov/inn)  
Iowa Dept. on Aging [iowaaging.gov](http://iowaaging.gov)

# Stocking a Healthy Pantry

Have you ever experienced a natural disaster such as a tornado or earthquake? How about a snowstorm? Or having an extended power outage? What about the recent COVID-19 pandemic? During times like these, you may have realized how important it is to have a stocked pantry. But what does a healthy pantry look like? Here are some healthy staple foods to keep in your pantry.

- Roasted/Unsalted Nuts (Choose your favorite!)
- Canned Tomatoes or other Vegetables
- Nut Butters
- Canned Tuna or Salmon
- Canned Beans
- Canned Fruit
- Whole Grain Noodles
- Shelf Stable Milk
- Olives
- Whole Grain Bread
- Rolled Oats
- Unsweetened Dried Fruit

**Look for lower sodium and lower sugar versions for even healthier options!**

**FORTY-ONE MILLION PEOPLE in the U.S. are food insecure. Are you unable to properly stock your pantry because of low funds? Call 211 for resources available in your area.**



**FOR EVAPORATED AND POWDERED MILKS, add water back in to use in place of fresh dairy milk.**

## Get to Know Shelf Stable Milks

Shelf stable milks are milks such as evaporated, sweetened condensed, powdered, to name a few. All of these forms of “pantry milk” start with fresh dairy milk, and then are “processed” in a special way to make it shelf stable.

**Evaporated Milk** - Fresh, homogenized milk that has 60% of the liquid taken out. *Food safety tip: Once opened, be sure to refrigerate and use within 3-4 days.*

**Powdered Milk** - Instead of part of the liquid being removed, all of the liquid is removed.

**Liquid Shelf-Stable Milk** - Real milk that has been pasteurized at high temperature. This allows it to have a shelf life of several months without refrigeration.

**Sweetened Condensed Milk** - It has sugar added to it and is not a substitute for fresh milk.

*Source: <https://www.holleygrainger.com/what-are-shelf-stable-milks-and-how-can-i-use-them/>*

Unscramble Answers (page 4)  
1. Pop Tarts, French Fries  
2. Sausages, Potato Chips  
3. Ice Cream, Ramen Noodles  
4. Soft Drink, Frozen Pizza

Need help finding a food pantry, free hot meals or community garden?  
Call 2-1-1 for resources available in your area.



# Energy Bites



**Serves 25, 1 bite, \$0.21**

## Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups oats (old fashioned or quick)
- 1/2 cup unsweetened coconut flakes
- 1/4 cup chia seeds
- 1/4 cup mini chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

## Instructions:

1. Stir all ingredients together in a medium sized bowl.
2. Cover a cookie sheet with foil or parchment paper. Drop mixture by tablespoonfuls onto the cookie sheet.
3. Refrigerate 1 hour.
4. Roll each drop of mixture into a ball. Place in an airtight container. Store in the refrigerator.

**Try experimenting with different flavors! Use finely chopped dried cranberries, cherries, or raisins in place of the coconut flakes, chia seeds, or chocolate chips. Freeze the energy bites and pull out a few as needed!**

**Nutrition Information (per 1 bite): 90 calories, 5 grams fat, 10 grams carbohydrates, 2 grams fiber, 5 grams total sugar (5 grams added sugar), 2 grams protein, 25 milligrams sodium**

*This recipe is provided by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. For more resources like this, visit the Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website at <http://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu>". Spend Smart. Eat Smart. is a registered trademark of Iowa State University.*

# Unscramble the Ultra-Processed Foods

1. OPP RTAT

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2. AUAGESSE

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3. CIE ARCME

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4. TOFS KRIND

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5. CREHFN IRFES

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6. OTTOPA SHPIC

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7. MEANR ODELONS

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8. ROFZNE ZIPAZ

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## How are you doing?

This is a common question we ask our relatives, neighbors and friends. If they're feeling isolated or lonely, chances are they won't say so...but don't be afraid to dig a little deeper.

**More than 8 million adults age 50 and older are affected by isolation.**

Research shows that social isolation is as bad for health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. If you or your loved ones are feeling isolated, check out the assessment tool at [Connect2Affect.org](http://Connect2Affect.org) to get practical advice on how to help.